



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

FEBRUARY 23, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

| NAME | TITLE | STATUS | ARRIVED |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|---------|
| Dan Bartman | Designated Co-Chair | <i>Present</i> | |
| Cortney Kirk | Designated Co-Chair | <i>Present</i> | |
| Frank Valdes | Member | <i>Absent</i> | |
| Deborah Fennick | Member | <i>Present</i> | |
| Andrew Arbaugh | Member | <i>Late</i> | 6:28pm |
| Heidi Cron | Member | <i>Present</i> | |
| Tim Talun | Member | <i>Present</i> | |

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Co-Chair, Daniel Bartman at 6:06pm and adjourned at 9:24pm. As authorized by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, Co-Chair and Director of Planning & Zoning Sarah Lewis designated Senior Planner Daniel Bartman to serve as Co-Chair in her place for this meeting. Co-Chair & Director of Public Space & Urban Forestry Luisa Oliveira designated Cortney Kirk to serve as Co-Chair in her place for this meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Amendment of Rules of Procedures and Policies

Following a motion by Member Cron, seconded by Member Talun, the Board voted unanimously (3-0) to adopt.

DESIGN REVIEW: 67 Broadway (Revolutionary Clinics)

Anne Vigorito and Bruce Hampton presented the proposal. Mr. Hampton incorporated comments from the last meeting and provided a new site plan. Some of the changes included moving the entry to the center, adding bollards to the parking lot instead of wheel stops, and increasing the landscaping in the former trash area.

The Commission and the applicant discussed the proposed changes. The Commission felt the changes were more logical and intuitive. They spoke about adding additional bollards or heavy planters in front of the entrance to prevent parking and increase safety.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Cron, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to adopt additional recommendations.

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| RESULT: | APPROVED |
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Civic Space Zoning and Permitting Overview

Designated Co-Chair Courtney Kirk presented about the new Public Space and Urban Forestry division with a mission regarding the public realm. Director Luisa Oliveira and the PSUF team established guidelines related to Green Score and ensuring that the SomerVision Civic Space goal is being advanced. 60 of 105 acres will be from private development. The public benefit is looked for in proposals that respond to resident needs, instead of immediate building needs. Spaces that can be seen and identified as public, maximizing tree canopy, policies for ownership and operations, including maintenance, are taking priority. A Civic Space Study is required as part of the Master Plan Special Permit process.

The Commission and Co-Chair Kirk discussed the overall Civic Space design process and guidelines. They spoke about the progress of the envisioned 105 acres in SomerVision. They also discussed the process for reviewing Civic Spaces and if they are always included with the building review process.

DESIGN REVIEW: 31 Tufts Street

Deborah Myers and Eliza Datta presented for the applicant team. The project is an affordable housing Public/Private Partnership in East Somerville. The City put out an RFP in 2018 with housing and public open space requirements and this applicant team won the RFP. The Civic Space is approximately 5,400 square feet.

Understanding of the community needs led to benches and several trees for a quieter green space, with no basketball court, soccer field, or playground.

The applicant presented two options for designs. Option A was a more organic with a very permeable site plan, flexible place for furniture and seasonal planting, the Green Score (0.4) was balanced with the need for paving and planting. Option B was more linear and tighter, with the building raised slightly on Tufts Street and the park more on Glen Street, built in seating around planters with “fun amenity shelters” to break down scale and provide families more private use (like individual picnic areas), Green Score (0.42) is comprised more of softscape materials. Both options met all of the Pocket Park guidelines.

The Commission and applicant team discussed combining details from the two options, as many members are drawn to the form of Option A and the function of Option B. The Commission reminded the applicant to make sure to pay attention to accessible seating. They spoke about how the open space and plantings will interact with the building. The Board touched upon how Option A offers more flexibility and may fit this casual neighborhood better. They also discussed irrigation.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend design Option A.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Cron, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend that all the design guidelines for a Pocket Park are satisfied.

Following a motion by Member Cron, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend that all the feedback given this evening is incorporated into the revised design.

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| RESULT: | RECOMMENDED |
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DESIGN REVIEW: 73 Summer Street

Nick Ogonowsky, Ryan Spragg, Ryan Noone presented for the applicant team. Mr. Noone started by going over the fifteen comments the team previously received from the UDC. They had also worked with PSUF to determine the streetscape and planned street trees.

Design Option 3 had been focused and brought back with material changes. The applicant showed a side by side of the previous design and the newly proposed design – including wood at the corner, a change in the design of the bays in the brick volume, and more greenery around the building. The plan changed the setback on the street edges to create 12' sidewalks on Summer Street and School Street, bump out of the curb on the corner, a large tree added in the parklet, and increased permeable paving for usability in the patio area. 18 parking spaces, 9 units per floor (27 total) and roof mechanicals screened with wood fencing 5' tall are all included in the proposal. The lot usage did drop due to the increased setbacks.

Natalie Adams presented the landscape plan. They aligned the ramp to the building edge and expanded sitting space on the residential patio. They added epee wood tiles and an extensive green roof over the parking area, low plantings will be included so that people will be able to see the piece of machinery (wind turbine) on the adjacent parcel, transparent safety rail, bike parking, and pervious pavers wrapping the building. They also added a large tree and a bench in sidewalk sitting area. The team has still exceeded the required Green Score.

The applicant team and the Commission discussed the updated design and building materials. They spoke about the overall evolution of the design and how the new design was more balanced. They also touched upon the public realm and updated landscaping plan. The Commission offered suggestions to enhance the design even further by adding wood around the windows, adding glass balconies, narrowing the gap on Summer Street, and changing the coloring of some of the materials.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Cron, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend that all the design guidelines for the district are satisfied.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend that all the feedback given this evening is incorporated into the revised design.

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

DESIGN REVIEW: 28 Chestnut Street

(continued from February 9, 2021)

Doug Gensler presented for the applicant team. He noted that the team is committed to the authenticity of the materiality of neighborhood as well as investigating clay and industrial materials, but wants to deliver them in a more contemporary way. The updated design had a lightened North façade, so the body of the building had a heavier brick base with a more transparent modern end. They updated the materials from rusty steel to corten, old brick to a longer brick, galvanized panels to zinc, and clapboard to shiplap.

The podium level at the storefront area had been updated to include canopies, awnings, and additional lighting. They also spoke about setting up the entry as a mediator between the two buildings. The applicant team tried to use the materials to create unity between the two buildings.

DESIGN REVIEW: 28 Fitchburg Street

(continued from February 9, 2021)

Doug Gensler continued the presentation. This building had similar materials as 28 Chestnut Street, with a modern interpretation of an industrial palette. The podium color was different between North and South. Updates included South end parking for the artist's lofts with greening and a possible mural on the building or landscape frames for changing urban art, step-back at upper floor for a terrace, and a loading dock at far end of Chestnut Street.

The Commission and applicant team discussed how the design was still too timid and substantial changes haven't been made. They also didn't believe extra surface parking was necessary, even if the residents requested it. The Commission suggested bringing the corten to the lower level, incorporating exterior sunshades, continuing brick throughout the entirety of the base of both buildings, and overall increased landscaping. The applicant team noted that they prefer to focus on the streetscape, open space, and human experience rather than the building itself. The Commission suggested that to accomplish that they need to increase the landscaping greatly. They noted that the three large garage doors and the loading area was not pedestrian-friendly. Bike parking location was also mentioned. The Commission also recommended adding additional public art into the design to develop the vision of the Brickbottom neighborhood.

The Commission would like the landscape and public realm to be developed further, as well as the entire lower level/base of the building, including the delivery area. They would also like the penthouses to be re-designed to be more subtle.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue to a future regularly scheduled meeting.

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| RESULT: |
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| CONTINUED |
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NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. To review a full recording, please contact the Planning & Zoning Division at planning@somervillema.gov.